

Robin Shepherd
R D 1
Kaitaia
09 4084192.

Shane Taylor
P O Box 41-150
St Lukes
AUCKLAND.

Dear Shane,

I see that you are collecting history of the Cape Brett Lighthouse.

I have a little information.

In the early 1960's I was the school teacher/postmaster at Te Rawhiti.

The lighthouse shared the same party line so I had cause to chat with the keepers from time to time.

The chairman of my school committee was Henry Clendon (Henare Tinana).

He told me something of his role as a relief assistant lighthouse keeper at Cape Brett in previous years. I think he was referring to years at the end of WWII, and perhaps the years just afterwards.

From time to time he was engaged to act as a relief keeper when staff were on annual leave. To get to the lighthouse he would ride a horse along the rather primitive track from Rawhiti to Cape Brett via Deep Water Cove. I have ridden a horse along some of that track and it is only for the brave, both horse man and horse. I never tried the last bit of the track which traversed a razor back ridge with a cliff on one side and scree slope on the other.

Henry recounted how when he arrived at that spot he would dismount and unsaddle the horse, take off the bridle and tie a tether rope around the horse's neck. He would then carry the saddlery along with his gear in a pikau bag and lead the horse.

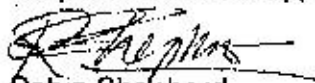
He was not prepared to risk the horse slipping to its death with his saddle gear on board.

He never commented upon the possibility of him slipping to his death complete with saddle and bridle.

After a week, I imagine that the horse would be delighted to head for home after having been eating the very slim pickings of grass around the light house

On one occasion I helped relay messages for the keepers when one of the residents at the light became sick and had to walk over the range to Deep Water Cove to be met by a Fuller's launch with a doctor on board. The weather and sea prevented a pickup at the light house landing. It must have been extremely daunting for the woman concerned to make the journey on foot with only her husband to accompany her over that rugged track.

I hope that these snippets will add to your story.


Robin Shepherd.

12 September 2006